Core issues regarding women’s health need more focused attention: IMA

New Delhi, Feb 11, 2017: Women are not diagnosed or treated as aggressively as men. Even though more women than men die of heart disease each year, women receive only 33% of all angioplasties, stents and bypass surgeries; 28% of implantable defibrillators and 36% of open–heart surgeries, according to the National Coalition for Women with Lifestyle Disease.

Women experience unique health issues and conditions, from pregnancy and menopause to gynecological conditions. Because women’s health is so broad, it requires a well-rounded and holistic approach.

Padma Shri Awardee Dr K K Aggarwal, National President Indian Medical Association (IMA) and President Heart Care Foundation of India (HCFI) and Dr RN Tandon – Honorary Secretary General IMA in a joint statement said that, “Although the traditional risk factors for coronary artery disease — such as high cholesterol, high blood pressure and obesity — have a detrimental impact in men and women, certain factors play a bigger role in the development of heart disease in women. Maternal health issues also remain the foremost cause of concern. Although several government schemes have been implemented, the benefits do not penetrate deep enough. The WHO estimates that every year, almost 287,000 women die due to complications during pregnancy and childbirth.”

“There is a strong need to look at women’s health issues from a separate perspective. New trends are continuously emerging; evidence suggests that women are more prone than men to experience anxiety, depression, and somatic complaints. Depression is the most common mental health problem for women and suicide a leading cause of death for women under 60. These statistics suggest that further studies need to be undertaken in this regard to understand core health issues that Indian women are facing. The rate of non-communicable diseases is also showing a major upsurge and thus, helping girls and women adopt healthy lifestyles early on is key to a long and healthy life”, added Dr. K.K Aggarwal.

Some noteworthy points regarding women health are as follows:

1. Metabolic syndrome — a combination of increased blood pressure, elevated blood glucose and triglycerides — has a greater impact on women than men.
2. Mental stress and depression affect women’s hearts more than they do men’s.
3. Smoking is much worse for women than men.
4. A low level of estrogen before menopause is a significant risk factor for developing microvascular disease.
5. Though women will often have some chest pain or discomfort, it may not be the most prominent symptom. Diffuse plaques build–up and diseased smaller arteries are two reasons why symptoms can be different in women.
6. Women present more often with atypical symptoms of heart attack. Neck, shoulder, upper back or abdominal discomfort, shortness of breath, nausea or vomiting, sweating, symptoms of heart attack in addition to the classical symptom of chest pain, pressure or discomfort.
7. Endothelial dysfunction is more common in women. In this the lining of the artery does not expand (dilate) properly to boost blood flow during activity, which increases the risk of coronary artery spasm and sudden death.
8. Results of the WISE study suggest that the commonly used treatments for coronary artery disease — angioplasty and stenting — are not the best options for women with more diffuse plaques.
9. Typical tests for coronary artery disease — angiogram, treadmill testing and others — are not reliable in women.


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About IMA: Indian Medical Association is the only representative, national voluntary organization of Doctors of Modern Scientific System of Medicine, which looks after the interest of doctors as well as the well being of the community at large. It has its Headquarter in Delhi and State / Terr. Branches in 30 States and Union Territories. It has over 2, 60,000 doctors as its members through more than 1765 active local branches spread across the country.

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